



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
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October 6, 2004

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Carl Osaki, Environmental Health Committee Chair

RE: APPROVAL OF PROPOSED FINAL REPORT ON COMMUNITY  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

**Summary**

The Environmental Health Committee work plan, approved by the Board in January 2002, called for Committee staff to conduct a survey of community health assessment processes currently used in Washington State to address environmental health issues. A primary goal of the project was to enhance Board policymaking by promoting processes that identify diverse community values, beliefs and priorities and that provide this information to policymakers. Community environmental health assessment is a tool for more systematic, transparent, broad-based, and inclusive environmental health policymaking processes.

Today I will present a summary of the project. I will end my presentation with a list of Committee recommendations to improve community environmental health assessment practice. The Board will also hear from Michael Davis and Marcella Wilson about the Seattle Environmental Justice Needs Assessment (EJNA) and why it is an example of a successful assessment process. The Seattle EJNA is one of the best practices identified by the Committee and described in the Final Report on Community Environmental Health Assessment. (Please see materials behind Tab 5.)

A draft of the proposed report has been sent out to all who participated in the survey. It is also included in the materials for this meeting. Staff proposes to circulate the report for an additional week. This would give Board members and others additional time to review the report and provide comment. Afterward, staff will revise the report as necessary, then circulate the revised draft to Chair Locke and myself for final approval.

**Recommended Board Motion**

*The Board approves the draft of the proposed Final Report on Community Environmental Health Assessment, as presented October 6 {and amended}. It directs staff to continue soliciting comment on the report until 5 p.m. October 13, revise the draft as necessary and appropriate, and circulate it one more time to the Board and Committee chairs for review and comment. At the end of the process, the Chair and Committee are authorized by the Board to approve a final draft for publication.*

## **Background**

The work products in the Environmental Health Committee work plan, approved by the Board in January 2002, included a survey of community health assessment processes currently used in Washington State to address environmental health issues. This survey was developed in response to the Environmental Justice Committee's finding that communities perceive the need for more meaningful community involvement in processes addressing environmental health problems. One of the project's primary goals was to enhance Board policymaking by promoting processes that identify diverse community values, beliefs and priorities, and that provide this information to policymakers.

In October 2002, the CDC awarded the Department of Health a grant to enhance and improve community health assessment practice in Washington State in partnership with local health jurisdictions. Board staff was invited to participate in the advisory committee for this Assessment in Action (AIA) partnership. The work plans for the Board Committee and the AIA overlapped somewhat. For example, AIA developed a Web site describing community health assessment processes, models, and resources (see [www.assessnow.info](http://www.assessnow.info)), removing the need for Board staff to include this information in the Board report. The role of the Board staff member on the AIA advisory committee was to strengthen environmental health and community engagement within community health assessment practice. For more information on AIA, please see <http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/AIA/default.htm>.

Board staff member Marianne Seifert interviewed local health jurisdiction environmental health and community assessment staffs, State Department of Health, Department of Ecology staffs, a Tribal health planner, and four groups of community partners. She asked about existing processes and models used to identify and address environmental health problems with communities. Few models or processes were identified that systematically identified and involved diverse community members in identifying and addressing environmental health priorities. Two such processes were found—the Island County Environmental Health Assessment Team and the Seattle Environmental Justice Needs Assessment (EJNA). Both of these processes are included as best practices in the Committee's Final Report on Community Environmental Health Assessment, attached. Today the Board will hear from Michael Davis, and Marcella Wilson about the Seattle EJNA and why it is an example of a successful assessment process (see attached EJNA materials).

The Committee brought together a group of local and state agency, non-governmental, and university people interested in community environmental health assessment to develop recommendations for how local and state agencies and their community partners can improve assessment practice. To develop its recommendations, this group relied on recommendations suggested by agency and community members who were interviewed for the report. The Committee then met with a small group of local health jurisdiction, Ecology, and DOH representatives to develop the final list of eight recommendations (see attached proposed Final Report on Community Environmental Health Assessment).

The Committee hopes that this project inspires additional Board, agency, interagency, and public discussions. It also hopes that the Board, along with local, state, and Tribal agencies and their community partners can use this report to improve community involvement and policy-making processes.